

BRIEFS

LIFEWAY BIBLE DRIVE ENTERS SECOND YEAR

NASHVILLE (BP) — On Nov. 17-22, LifeWay Christian Stores will host a nationwide Bible drive for the second year at all of its 170 stores to collect copies of God's Word to donate to mission organizations and local ministries. LifeWay Stores will accept new or gently-used Bibles during regular business hours. Customers can contact their local LifeWay Store to find out what ministry or mission organization will receive Bibles collected in their area. LifeWay is the largest Christian bookstore chain in the U.S. The Bible drive last year brought in more than 14,000 Bibles.

MAN ARRESTED FOR KY. CHURCH THREAT

BENTON, Ky. (BP) — Days before the shooting massacre at First Church in Sutherland, Texas, a Kentucky man was arrested for allegedly threatening to torch a Southern Baptist church in that state. Dustin Wright, age 24, of Calvert City, was charged Nov. 1 with terroristic threatening. Charles Frazier, pastor of Zion's Cause Church in Benton, said Wright came to the church asking for money. When he was offered food instead, the man became belligerent and said he would return to burn down the church. Earlier this year, a 70-year-old widow was murdered at a Southern Baptist church in Somerset, Ky.

R.G. LEE BIRTHPLACE NOW OPEN TO PUBLIC

JACKSON, Tn. (BP) — Baptist-affiliated Union University in Jackson, Tn., has opened the birth home of R.G. Lee, late pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis and a leading Southern Baptist statesman in his time who authored *Payday Someday*, possibly the most well-known sermon in Southern Baptist history. The 32-by-16-foot house, previously located at Bellevue Church, was built in the mid-19th century in Fort Mill, S.C. Among the items on display is the cradle used by the infant Lee. For more information, e-mail ascott@uu.edu or call (731) 661-6587.



BEARING THE GRIEF — Frank Pomeroy (left), pastor of First Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, and his wife Sherri (second from left), whose daughter was killed in the Nov. 5 mass shooting at the church, speak with Southern Baptist Convention President Steve Gaines (right) and his wife Donna (second from right). (BP photo courtesy of Southern Baptist TEXAN)

Sutherland Springs church now a memorial

"We want America to grieve with us because they've expressed so much love for us. We don't want to appear defeated. We're back in business, and it's God's business."

Mark Collins

Sutherland Springs Church, associate pastor

FLORESVILLE, Texas (BP and local reports) — A thirty-person team worked for three days to remove every trace of the terror inside First Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, so the building could reopen this past Sunday in remembrance of the 26 worshippers cut down the Sunday before by a crazed gunman who also wounded more than 20 others.

Damaged pews were gone. Every bullet hole in the wor-

ship center was patched. Blood-soaked carpet had been removed. The floor and walls were painted a bright white, with new ceiling tiles to match. Nothing from the old worship center remained.

Inside the open room now are hand-crafted, matching white chairs each with the name of a victim and a red rose propped upright against the back slat of

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Blasphemy laws threat to religious minorities

WASHINGTON (BP) — The October death sentences for three Pakistani Muslim men for what could be viewed as a minor offense in the West demonstrate the threat that blasphemy law enforcement in many countries could ultimately imperil the lives and liberties of Christians and other religious minorities, leaders say.

The judgments against the Pakistani men, all members of the Ahmadi Muslim sect, came after they were arrested in 2014 for allegedly tearing down an Islamic religious poster they considered to be anti-Ahmadi, according Voice of America (VOA).

While Ahmadis describe themselves as Muslims, officially Islamic Pakistan does not recognize them as such and prohibits some of their practices. Ahmadis differ from other Muslims in that they believe the Messiah has already come.

Daniel Mark, chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), said in an e-mail interview with Baptist Press (BP) that blasphemy accusations are

see LAWS on p. 9



Hill honored as 2017 Bivocational Pastor of the Year

Pecan farmer Robert "Bob" Hill (left), pastor of Roundaway Church, Mid-Delta Association, accepts the 2017 Bivocational Pastor of the Year Award from Michael Lee, director of pastor-leadership development at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, on the morning of Nov. 1 at the 182nd annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Raining fetuses and blood

Every day seems to bring new stories of sexual misbehavior involving some of the biggest names in American entertainment, politics, and almost every other field of endeavor. The much-applauded "sexual liberation" of the country has only liberated licentious men to take advantage of innocent women and underage girls in every imaginable way.

As sickening as the current levels of sexual harassment are, those practices pale in comparison to the ultimate predation of women and underage girls.

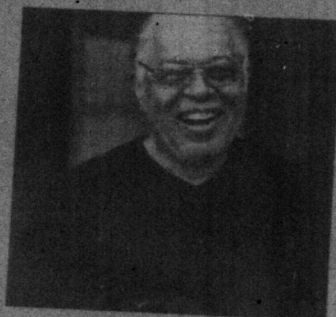
Kermit Gosnell was convicted in May 2013 on a breathtaking number of charges, including three counts of murder, in connection with the ghastly abortion clinic he owned in Philadelphia, Pa. Amazingly, there are still those among us who defend abortion as some noble cause to benefit both a woman who doesn't want a child and a child who would otherwise be brought into an overcrowded and inhumane world. Even more amazingly, these same people hold up as selfless heroes the butchers who take advantage of a desperate woman and her defenseless child.

When authorities raided Gosnell's abortion clinic in a search for illegal drug activity, they discovered a literal shop of horrors. Strewn about the clinic amid bloody recliners and unsanitary equipment, and clogging nearly every drain in the building, were human body parts—mangled pieces of unborn babies, actually—in various stages of decay.

Gosnell apparently did not even employ a licensed nurse at his clinic. That didn't stop the abortions, however, as he ordered unqualified and unlicensed employees to administer pre-abortion narcotics and other drugs to the mothers. There are even allegations that he allowed those same employees to perform the abortions when he was not available.

One unlicensed employee of the clinic, a graduate of a medical school on the South American island of Grenada and himself convicted of numerous crimes at the clinic, testified that, "It would rain fetuses and blood."

Gosnell is also alleged to have delivered full-term, viable babies and then severed their spinal cords with a pair of scissors. For some twisted reason known only to Gosnell, he



GOSNELL

cut off the feet of unborn babies and kept them in jars around the clinic. A grand jury that investigated Gosnell and his operation described the clinic as a "baby charnel house."

Gosnell is hardly alone among abortionists. Since abortion during all nine months of gestation was legalized by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, there have been thousands of reports of filthy clinics, violations of federal and state laws, barbaric acts committed on both mother and child, abortions performed on minors without parental permission, mistreatment of children born alive during botched abortions, unqualified employees lacerating the mother's internal organs, and cover-ups of questionable deaths, to name only a few of the outrages.

In many abortion clinics, there is a disassembly line in place where freshly aborted, still-twitching babies are gutted and sold for their body parts.

After the Gosnell revelations, people who still support abortion must acknowledge they care nothing about what happens to women and children in this country. People who still support abortion must confess that they're okay with poorly regulated, disease-ridden clinics where it rains babies and blood. People who still support abortion have to admit they're okay with body parts being ripped painfully from still-warm babies and sold for profit. They have to accept responsibility for the manifold inhuman acts perpetrated in their names, and so much more.

No doubt, they are satisfied with what happened to women and girls in Philadelphia's "baby charnel house." That's just the kind of people they are.

Kids and Money

Most of us wish our children would learn to manage their money well, perhaps better than we manage our own. What does the Bible say about money, and how do we communicate these principles to our children?

The Bible says God is the Creator and owner of all (Psalm 24:1-2; Psalm 104:24-30). We are to return to Him a portion of what He has given to us, obediently and cheerfully, to advance His Kingdom (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8).

We are to use the rest to provide for our families and to care for the needs of those around us in a discerning and thoughtful manner (Ephesians 4:28; Micah 6:8).

How do we help our children apply these principles? First, they need to have their own money. Different families do this in different ways. However you choose for your children to receive money, they need to be taught that some of it needs to be returned to God.

Our children started to receive an allowance when they turned five years old. We taught them that at least 10% needed to be given to God at church. We also taught our children that at least 10% of their earnings had to be put into a savings account.

How do we teach our children to use the other 80% wisely? We gave our children a fairly wide latitude in what they did with that money, offering guidance and suggestions but giving them freedom to make choices and to learn.

Some chose to give extra to meet special Kingdom needs. Sometimes they frittered it away on trivial things. When they found something they really wanted and discovered they did not have enough money to purchase it, they learned that when you run out, you do without.

We had to learn not to try to fix their mistakes. We realized it's better to let them make some bad choices with a few dollars and learn from it, than to make bad choices later on with many more dollars.

What about debt? The Bible teaches us not to become a slave to debt, and this is certainly something our children



Guest opinion
with Elizabeth Owens

need to learn. On extremely rare occasions when there was a particular item one of them wanted, we would let him borrow ahead to purchase it, in large part so he would learn about debt firsthand.

We were very strict about repayment, and when the child saw how little was left from each week's allowance after tithe, savings, and debt payments were taken out, he soon learned debt is a burden to be avoided. Planning ahead and waiting to purchase what he wanted seemed a much better option.

All of this may sound good and helpful, but we don't want our children to give only because we say so or to scheme to get the most for themselves from their money. The most important element in teaching our children to manage money is to teach them about God's gift of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. We demonstrate His life in us daily before them, and we pray earnestly for their salvation.

When they do make the choice to follow Jesus, His Spirit in them will guide them in all their life decisions, including how they handle the money and possessions He has given them. Only then can they know the true joy of obedient giving and living a life of discipline and service to their families and others.

Owens is the mother of four. Her husband Waylan is dean of Southwestern Seminary's Jack D. Terry Jr. School of Church and Family Ministries. This column first appeared at the seminary's BiblicalWoman.org website, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style and length.

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Pew Research: Gender opinions track political leanings

NASHVILLE (BP) — Republicans are far more likely to believe gender is limited to one's biological sex apparent at birth, according to statistics Pew Research Center released Nov. 8 after local transgender victories in U.S. elections the day before.

In Virginia, Democrat Danica Roem unseated 13-term incumbent Republican Robert G. Marshall to become the first openly transgender "woman" elected to a U.S. statehouse, The Hill reported.

In Minneapolis, Andrea Jenkins, a member of the Democratic-Farmer-Laborer Party, became the first openly transgender African American "woman" elected to public office in the U.S. by defeating three opponents for a Minneapolis City Council seat, The Hill said.

While just over half of Americans say gender is determined by the sex assigned at birth, Pew reported that among Republicans the number is about 80%. That contrasts to the 34% of Democrats who say gender is

determined by one's biological birth gender, according to Pew statistics gathered during four weeks in August and September of this year.

Adding fuel to the issue are contemporary debates regarding which public bathrooms transgender individuals should be allowed to use, whether transgenders should serve in the U.S. military, and which gender they should be assigned on public documents.

Educational attainment further indicates how Democrats

feel on the issue, Pew reported. Seventy-seven percent of Democrats with a bachelor's degree or higher said a person's gender can be different than that assigned at birth. The percentage falls to 57% among those with a high school diploma or less.

Among Republicans, the results indicated no difference based on educational attainment, Pew noted.

The poll was conducted online Aug. 8-21 and Sept. 14-28 among 4,573 people included in Pew's American Trends survey.

The poll found no consensus among Americans of all political hues regarding whether society has been too accepting or not accepting enough of transgender people, Pew said.

Regarding relationships with transgender individuals, 37% of Americans said they know someone who is transgender, Pew reported, including 13% who said they have a close friend or relative who is transgender.

Pew's analysis of the findings is available at pewresearch.org under the FactTank heading.

Church security in spotlight following Texas massacre

DALLAS (BP and local reports) — With church security on the minds of many pastors and other church leaders in the wake of the tragedy at First Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas, churches of all sizes are re-evaluating their security protocols — or just beginning to plan for the worst.

The massacre in the small South Texas town helped shed light on an unfortunate truth that GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins has noted: violence can strike any church in any town.



HAWKINS

"The idea of, 'It can't happen here,' has been shattered with the Sutherland Springs tragedy," Hawkins said. "Churches and ministries need to take precautions that make sense given their profile, location and local needs."

Information is available to any church free of charge by visiting GuideStone.org/Security.

Many church security experts recommend the "Iceberg Approach" to church security — 10% of a church's security should be seen, while 90% should be below the surface. This helps keep the church from feeling like a fortress designed to keep people out.

The visible elements — lighting, security cameras, locks on doors, designated safety patrols, etc. — remind the congregation that measures are in place without being overwhelming. The behind-the-scenes elements help make sure the church can quickly prevent, respond to, and recover from a threat.

If possible, the church should have a uniformed police officer patrolling the facilities,

Hawkins said. "This can help provide visible protection while also introducing police as positive role models and encouraging positive interactions with children, youth, and the church community."

Gaelen Cole, senior manager of risk and compliance for GuideStone's Property and Casualty area, said, "It's like locking your car doors at the mall or your home at night; it provides an important deterrent and may keep those with malicious intent out."



COLE

Visible

Churches are often considered soft targets. This means that they appear vulnerable to attack, with few hard defenses to keep aggressors out. Visible security can help fight the perception that the church is vulnerable to those who would cause harm. In addition to uniformed police, visible security measures include:

■ **Greeters.** They're the first line of defense. During services or activities, a church should post greeters at all unlocked entrances. They not only welcome everyone but also serve as important eyes and ears when it comes to threats. Train greeters in threat recognition and response. Local law enforcement or security experts can help.

■ **Safety and security patrols.** In addition to greeters, it's wise for churches to have a trained team patrol the property and parking lot during active hours. Sixty-four percent of violence at churches is outside, in parking lots, or on church grounds.



SURVEILLANCE — Installing cameras at key points on a church's property can deter criminal behavior and provide legal protection. (Photo by SpeedKingz/Shutterstock.com)

Churches should have a designated, trained, visible patrol to help deter opportunistic offenders. In fact, the same day as the Sutherland Springs mass shooting, national news media reported a woman and her friend were shot and killed in her car in the parking lot of a Catholic church in Fresno, Ca., allegedly by her estranged husband.

Sadly, Cole noted, domestic violence can spill over onto church property easily.

■ **Cameras.** Ideally, church cameras connect to a system that records activity in all key areas of the church property. Even if a church's ministry can't afford a full surveillance system, visible cameras even if inoperable are better than nothing. This deters behavior that would otherwise take place in secret such as theft, assault, abuse, vandalism, etc.

■ **Lighting.** Like cameras, lighting both interior and exterior eliminates opportunities for secret activities. This measure is a relatively inexpensive

way to make a church's ministry less of a target for assaults, theft, and the like. Make sure exterior lighting is on a timer or motion sensor so that it's certain to be on after dark.

■ **Closely-trimmed vegetation.** This is a measure against concealment. Thieves will use landscaping to aid their attempts to gain access during church activities or break in after hours.

Behind the scenes

Cole noted behind the scenes work includes preparation, training, and planning that complements or undergirds the visible elements. Developing an effective plan includes:

■ **Assessing threats.** Work with local law enforcement agencies, church security specialists, and risk management experts to assess the threats to the church or ministry. Not only should criminal threats be considered but also weather-related, political, and environmental threats as well. This will help

address all the areas of need as a church develops its plan.

■ **Planning the work.** Put together a team to craft the overall plan. This team should include the church's leadership, qualified and skilled volunteers, and any security or law enforcement experts with whom the church can work. A congregation should decide who is responsible for doing what, and divvy up the work so it's not too much of a burden on one person. Set deadlines and goals to help keep things moving along.

■ **Work the plan.** An unrehearsed, unused plan is virtually worthless. Fully implement all the elements of the plan, and make sure key players are trained and put through drills regularly. Make sure the congregation knows their part, too. Otherwise, panic can take over in crisis situations.

■ **Review annually.** A church should make sure that they keep their plan updated to address new or changing threats.

A pastor friend of mine was talking and interacting with a group of fifth-grade boys at church when one of them asked, "Do you practice what you preach?" The pastor immediately began to give his answer that yes, he tried to do everything he could to serve the Lord and be what God wanted him to be and to live his Christian faith. As my friend was explaining that all Christians should seek to follow the Lord and practice what they say they are, the young boy interrupted and said, "No, I'm talking about when you get your sermon ready. Do you stand in front of the mirror and practice what you're going to preach?" My pastor friend realized the boy was asking about one thing and he was answering something else.

Both questions are good. Preachers, do we practice what we preach in getting ready to preach? Christians, do we practice what we preach in living the message we proclaim? That last question is the most important of the two. Truth is that there are no perfect preachers, pastors, priests, prophets, nor people in the pews. In fact, only one is perfect among us and He is the Son of God.

Still, we should to the best of our understanding and the best of our ability surrender to the Lord, live the message we preach, and practice what we preach. That is true regardless of which way you are defining, "Do I practice what I preach?" Either way, let me suggest that you include these dimensions in significant areas when you're practicing your preaching.

One: As you practice what you preach, include a measure of grace. Regardless of whether you are preparing to deliver a message and practicing what you preach, or if you



Directions

With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Do You Practice What You Preach?

have preached and now face the responsibility and opportunity of living out what you preached, you will need the grace of God. It was the Apostle Paul who said, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10), and whether we recognize it or not or celebrate it or not, every one of us are what we are by the grace of God.

Sometimes those of us who do preach may proclaim a message but not think through how it impacts the lives of people that are hearing it. It may come across as harsh, thoughtless, or even mean. It's possible to declare truth and be on the right side of truth-telling, and at the same time be on the wrong side of love and care for the people that may have stumbled and fallen into the wrong that we're describing. We need to always think

through, pray through, and then practice through providing a measure of grace in issues with which we deal.

Two: As you practice what you preach, include a measure of race. When Jesus gave His Great Commission in Matthew 28, He said for us to go into all the world and make disciples of every nation. If you lose sight of the fact that God makes no exclusions to the Gospel or the people we're called to reach — if there are certain races you're thinking ought to be excluded from the Good News — you need to pause and revisit what Jesus said.

Do you think some races or individuals in certain races ought to be left out of the Kingdom? Be careful. It could be that people in those races think your race ought to be left out.

If so, they along with you are wrong. The Bible clearly states that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Every tongue, tribe, color, ethnic group, whatever the race — Jesus wants them to hear the Gospel. The Kingdom of God and His wonderful church are open to all races.

Three: Taste. At times in Scripture, the Word of God and even the presentation of the Word of God are pictured as honey, sweet to the taste and nourishing to the body. I heard a preacher recently say, "If you want to come here and hear me and have your ears tickled and hear that everything is sweetness and light and be handed sugar-coated candy, you've come to the wrong place. If you don't want to come back, fine. Don't." I thought, that doesn't quite fit with the heart of Jesus who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 23:37)! He loved even when He was rejected. He longed even for those who turned and walked away.

There's a lesson for all of us in that little boy's question, "Do you practice what you preach?" Whether it's preparing to stand in the pulpit to preach or living as Christians in our family and community, every one of us need to think before God about Him having control of our lives and us practicing what we preach.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Rising costs lead to cuts at Southwestern Seminary

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Escalating health care costs, increased expenses for utilities, and other higher education costs have prompted personnel cuts at Southwestern Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas.

Initial adjustments to operations were not sufficient to stay within the \$36.8 million 2017-2018 fiscal year budget set by the seminary's trustees last spring, according to a Nov. 7 news release from Charles Patrick Jr., the seminary's vice president for strategic initiatives and communications.

With a cumulative increase of 42% over the past three years, health care now accounts for 10% of Southwestern's operating budget.

In serving 42 years as a president of Southern Baptist schools, Patterson said, "Not a day of it has been free from concerns about funding. The exorbitant cost of health care is the latest dilemma. Consequently, we have to tighten our belt."

After making "low-hanging fruit adjustments" that included reductions in dining services, copy center hours, and the fleet of vehicles on the 200-acre campus, Patrick said the administration decided not to fill positions from natural attrition including student employees who are graduating and staff and faculty set to retire.

In order to continue providing health care benefits to employees and

their dependents, a third round of cuts involved laying off 30 fulltime staff "in selected areas where functions can be covered in other ways or by organizational change," Patrick said.

Noting that implementation of the Affordable Care Act prompted many institutions and companies to discontinue spousal and dependent coverage from employer health insurance plans, Patrick said Southwestern has made the decision to maintain those benefits because the seminary "places a high value on the family... a critical institution established by God."

The 865-member workforce at Southwestern includes 300 fulltime and 565 part-time employees. Classes taught by the four faculty members scheduled to retire will be covered by current professors.

Patterson expressed appreciation for the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist funding channel for state and worldwide missions and ministries which provides 22% of the operating budget to subsidize campus services and tuition expenses for students.

"The head count enrollment at Southwestern continues to be sustained, but students are taking fewer hours as they themselves make budget adjustments and work multiple jobs during these economic times of increased expenses," Patrick said.



OFFERING PRAISE — Worshippers gather in McGorman Chapel on the campus of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. The building, completed in 2011, hosts weekly chapel services, graduations, and other seminary special events. It also houses the permanent exhibit of the three fragments of Dead Sea Scrolls acquired by the seminary in 2010. (SWBTS photo)

Pro-life pregnancy care centers win big battle in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, Calif. (BP) — Pro-life pregnancy care centers in Los Angeles will not be forced to promote abortion after a state trial judge last week halted enforcement of California's Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care, and Transparency (FACT) Act.

Riverside County Superior Court Judge Gloria Trask issued a permanent injunction against the 2015 law that required pregnancy care centers to post signs or distribute literature telling women the state offers free or low-cost contraception and abortions.

The law also required pro-life centers to give women a local abortion provider's phone number.

"The FACT Act compels speech, and regulates content," Trask said in her ruling. "This speech is not merely the transmittal of neutral information, such as the calorie count of a food product, or the octane of gasoline purchased at a pump."

Trask noted that while the California government may support access to abortion, "its ability to impress free citizens into state services in this political dispute cannot be absolute; it must be limited." She ruled the law violates California's constitutional protections for free speech.

While enforced so far only in Los Angeles, the FACT Act prompted lawsuits from multiple pro-life organizations on behalf of pregnancy care centers throughout the state on the grounds that the mandated pro-abortion statement amounted to government-coerced speech and violated their religious liberty.

Scott Scharpen, founder of The Scharpen Foundation, said the law went "profoundly against" the mission and purpose of the group's mobile clinic, Go Mobile for Life. His organization filed suit against then-California Attorney General Kamala Harris in November 2015 and won the favorable ruling from Trask on Oct. 30.

Kamala, a Democrat, is now a U.S. senator.

Scharpen said members of his organization were "overjoyed" at Trask's verdict and are prepared to pursue the case through an expected appeal by current California Attorney General Xavier Becerra.

"It's our hope that as we continue to litigate this through the

state court system that other judges will look on it in a similar way," Scharpen said.

Scharpen's group is so far the only pro-life organization to win a fight against the law.

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed suit in October 2015 on behalf of the National Institute of Family and Life Advocates, a network of pregnancy care centers. The organization argued the law violated the state and U.S. constitutions by limiting pregnancy care center workers' free speech and freedom of religion.

After the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco ruled in favor of the California law in October 2016, ADF asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case.

Liberty Counsel also filed suit on behalf of three pro-life pregnancy centers, saying the law violated the U.S. Constitution's provision for freedom of speech and exercise of religion. The Ninth Circuit also denied that request for an injunction, and the three centers appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court which could decide this week whether to hear the case.

Liberty Counsel attorney Mat Staver said the recent state court ruling likely will weigh into the Supreme Court justices' decision on whether to take his organization's case: "What this now does is make a specific conflict between the state decision and the federal court decision, and that's a classic example of what the Supreme Court looks for to take cases."

Pro-life groups have successfully defeated similar laws in Maryland, Illinois, Austin (Texas), and New York City. A suit against a new Hawaii law even tougher than the California law is ongoing.

If the Supreme Court strikes down California's law, it will leave Hawaii's law vulnerable and perhaps dissuade other states from considering similar legislation, Staver said.

"This is government-coerced speech. If this doesn't stop in California, there's other states no doubt that will follow suit..."

Editor's Note: Used by permission of WORLD News Service, a division of WORLD Magazine (worldmag.com) based in Asheville, N.C. Edited for style and clarity.

Mat Staver

Liberty Counsel attorney

"This is government-coerced speech. If this doesn't stop in California, there's other states no doubt that will follow suit..."



ACT OF CONSCIENCE — Republican U.S. Sen. James Lankford, a former staffer at the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, speaks at a Capitol Hill news conference in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 8 in support of the Conscience Protection Act, while other members of Congress and nurses who were victims of abortion discrimination look on. (BP photo)

Conscience Act back on pro-life legislative agenda

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP and local reports) — Pro-life leaders from around the country are renewing their call for enactment of protections for the conscience rights of health care providers.

The Conscience Protection Act (CPA), a legislative priority of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, would bar government discrimination against health care workers and facilities that object to being involved in abortion, as well as health insurers that refuse to provide coverage of the lethal procedure performed on unborn children.

The U.S. House of Representatives approved CPA in 2016, but the U.S. Senate failed to act on it. The bill will provide victims of discrimination with the ability to defend their rights in court, which would be a first for federal laws that protect health care conscience rights.

The Republican-controlled House passed CPA in September of this year as part of a consolidated spending package, but the Republican-controlled Senate version of the spending package does not include the conscience measure.

ERLC and its pro-life allies are urging congressional

leadership to make CPA a priority in negotiations over the spending package. U.S. President Donald Trump has promised his support, according to the office of Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), a key pro-life leader.

ERLC President Russell Moore and Roman Catholic Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York issued a joint call Nov. 8 for all Americans to support conscience rights.

In an opinion piece in USA Today, Moore and Dolan wrote, "On one of our most divisive issues, we have an opportunity to unite across political, religious and regional divides to agree that those who respect the life of the unborn child have a right to act on that belief, that we are not second-class citizens."

"Even those who disagree with us on abortion should see that respecting the right to choose not to be involved in abortion is part of being 'pro-choice,'" said Moore and Dolan, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Pro-life Activities. "[W]e find it hard to imagine how those who call themselves 'pro-choice' could deny another the choice of following his or her conscience."

In a document in support of the CPA, ERLC cited two

examples of violations of federal conscience protections in the last eight years:

■ In 2009, Cathy DeCarlo, a nurse at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, was threatened with the loss of her job if she did not participate in the abortion of a 22-week-old unborn child. The hospital receives federal funds.

■ In 2011, the federal Department of Health and Human Services denied a grant renewal to the USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services because it would not pledge to refer human trafficking survivors to health care providers that cover abortion.

Speaking at a Capitol Hill news conference Nov. 8 in Washington, D.C., were Sandra Mendoza, who lost her nursing job after 18 years at the Winnebago County Health Department in Rockford, Ill., when she refused to assist in an abortion; and Fe Vinoya, who was warned she could lose her job as a nurse at University Hospital in Newark, N.J., if she did not take part in an abortion.

The CPA's sponsors, Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma and Republican Rep. Diane Black of Tennessee, were among members of Congress who spoke at the news conference.

Just for the Record



HARMONY CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, sponsored a pumpkin sewing class for the WMU Oct. 28.



Daniel Eddings was ordained as deacon at **FIRST CHURCH, AMORY**, Nov. 5. He is shown with his wife Amanda, children Layla and Landon, and pastor Allen Simpson.



LORENA CHURCH, SMITH COUNTY, ordained Mark Tanner and Jim Prestage Nov. 5. Norris Ables also presented Jerry Hawkins and Robert Derrick a plaque of appreciation for 50 years of service.



FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, ELLISVILLE, held a service to honor veterans Nov. 5. The Young Explorers from Children's Church presented the veterans with thank-you cards they made. Henry Freeman presented each veteran with an American flag.



FOREST CHURCH, FOREST, had a pastor appreciation fellowship in October for their pastors. Shown are Rob Hunt, his wife Kelsey, and children, Harper and Jackson; Joe Pate and his wife, Ceal; and Rick Sellers and his wife, Rendi.



CLEARY CHURCH, FLORENCE, recognizes its 2018 Bible drillers.



CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, held a Harvest Day, which is a homecoming day with giving to benevolence, with food and fellowship after the morning service.



EAST LOUISVILLE CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, participated in the Baptist World Day of Prayer Nov. 6.

In other Church News:

► New Salem Church, McCall Creek, has the following holiday events scheduled: Thanksgiving banquet, Nov. 19, after 11 a.m. service; Bude Christmas parade and outreach, Nov. 30, 3 p.m.



Lucy Harrell Turner (second from left) is shown presenting a 69-year-old to **HURLEY CHURCH, HURLEY**, members John M. Egbert, Judy Shoemaker, Annie Lee Churchwell, Francis Allen, and Sharon Byrd. The quilt was made in 1948 by women of the church as a thank-you gift to Turner's father, the late Wallace Harrell, Jackson Association missionary.

2017 Annie Armstrong Offering sets all-time record

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — North American Mission Board (NAMB) President Kevin Ezell has announced that the 2017 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions reached a historic high of \$59,648,377, topping the previous record in 2007 of \$59,463,281.

The \$58,860,553 given to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering in 2016 did rank as the second highest amount in the offering's history, and now moves to third highest.

"We are grateful for every dime we get from Southern Baptists," Ezell said. "We are thankful for churches, pastors and denomi-

national leaders who encourage their people to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

"We're primarily concerned about doing the very best we can with every dime that we receive, but any time we hit a new high like this, we want to celebrate."

NAMB seeks to equip visionary and effective missionaries who will rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to reach their communities. Church planting and Send Relief missionaries receive support from the Annie Armstrong offering.

In 1895, the Women's Missionary Union auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention collected the first missions offering to benefit North American

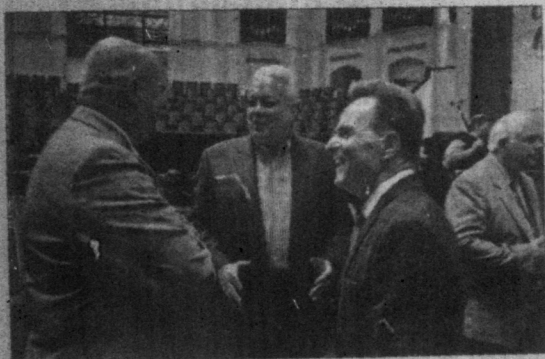
missions, then called home missions. Since that year, Southern Baptists have raised more than one billion dollars through the offering named in honor of the missions advocate and WMU leader, Annie Armstrong.

The Annie Armstrong offering funds 50% of NAMB's ministry budget. Every dollar of the offering goes directly to the field in support of NAMB missionaries who proclaim the Gospel throughout the United States, Canada and other territories.

Every year around Easter, churches collect money for the offering and send those funds to NAMB by way of their state conventions.

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING
anniearmstrong.com

Mississippi Baptist Convention



ANNUAL MEETING TALK — Mike Vincent (left), newly-elected president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) and senior pastor of Clarke-Venable Church in Decatur, talks Nov. 1 at the end of the 182nd annual meeting of the MBC with Michael Catt (center) and Ronnie Floyd. Catt, a Mississippi native, and senior pastor of Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga., delivered the meeting's Bible Treasures series of devotionals. Floyd, senior pastor of multi-campus Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and former Southern Baptist Convention president, preached the closing message of the meeting. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)



CONVENTION BOARD OFFICERS — In the organizational meeting of the newly-seated Mississippi Baptist Convention Board after the Nov. 1 close of the 182nd annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, Ken Hester (right), senior pastor of First Church, Pontotoc, was elected board president and Jon Daniels, senior pastor of Country Woods Church, Byram, was elected board vice-president. Not pictured is retired pastor Rex Yancey of Ripley, who will serve as board secretary. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

Kentucky governor issues bold demand on sexual harassment

FRANKFORT, Ky. (BP) — Amid sexual abuse and harassment scandals involving a bevy of politicians, entertainers, and journalists, Kentucky's outspoken evangelical governor has called for the resignation of state officials who have settled sexual harassment lawsuits.

Within days of Republican Gov. Matt Bevin's statement, the state's Republican Speaker of the House — who had previously condemned Bevin's demand — resigned his leadership post and another GOP House member was temporarily relieved of his chairmanship of a key board.

Both legislators admitted settling sexual harassment lawsuits and apologized for moral shortcomings, but denied legal wrongdoing.

Bevin, whose party gained control of the Kentucky House of Representatives last year for the first time in a century, said at a Nov. 4 news conference the alleged sexual misconduct of some individuals in state government was reprehensible.

"Any elected official or state employee who has settled a sexual harassment claim should resign immediately," he said, according to news media reports. "You either publicly condemn or you publicly condone this type of behavior, period. There is no hiding out. There is no middle ground. This is not about specific individuals... It is about specific behavior. It is about a culture that is despicable, that is vulgar, and that is unacceptable."

Two other Kentucky lawmakers and one legislative staff member also allegedly have settled sexual harassment claims, Kentucky Today reported. The state's House Republicans have hired a law firm to investigate the sexual harassment claims.

Bevin, a manufacturer and investor, is a member of South-



GET OUT — Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin termed sexual harassment "reprehensible" at a Nov. 4 press conference and targeted for resignation state officials who have settled sexual harassment lawsuits. (Screen capture from Lexington Herald-Leader)

east Christian Church in Louisville, an independent evangelical megachurch.

Southwestern Seminary assistant professor of theology in women's studies Katie McCoy weighed in on the issue in an Oct. 24 blog post.

Presenting an exegesis of Deuteronomy 22:23-27, McCoy stated, "Biblical law recognized rape as a violent crime against a woman," with lack of consent as the key factor in establishing the victim's innocence of any wrongdoing.

Scripture also suggests a woman's claim of sexual assault typically should be believed, McCoy argued. "The severity of sexual assault in God's Law compels us to hear, protect, and defend the dignity of every woman, especially the one who breaks her silence about rape."

Owen Strachan, associate professor of Christian theology at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., wrote in an

Oct. 13 blog post that the litany of sexual assault and harassment reports in the news media stem from Western culture's false belief that, "once we lose the constraints of sexual order... we'll all be happy."

However, happiness "is not what is playing out in America," Strachan pointed out.

"Absent moral duties and religious constraints," Strachan wrote, "men are behaving horribly and women are by and large unprotected. Men are preying on women; women are taken advantage of."

Strachan recommended an alternative to sexual perversion is for Christians to "create cultures of purity."

"We can train young women to flee ungodly, wicked men, and to reject a culture of sexual exhibitionism while embracing modesty and God-defined beauty. We can help all the church see that their identity, the core of their being, is not sexual, but spiritual," Strachan wrote.

Royce recognized for Mississippi College tenure



SERVICE COMMENDED — Lee Royce (right), president of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton, accepts a resolution in his honor from Doug Broome, president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and senior pastor of First Church, Natchez, for his 16 years of service to the school and the convention. Royce announced several weeks ago that he will retire in May 2018. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

JACKSON, Miss. (Special) — Mississippi College (MC) President Lee Royce was honored at the 182nd annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Nov. 1 for his 16 years of service to the largest of the three universities affiliated with the convention.

Royce, age 65, announced several weeks ago that he will be retiring in May of 2018. "The greatest honor of my life has been to serve as a college president," he told messengers and guests gathered in the sanctuary of First Church, Jackson.

Royce first served as president of Anderson University in Anderson, S.C., which is affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention, before taking the helm of Clinton-based MC.

During his tenure, MC enrollment has grown from 3,200 students to nearly 5,200 while the annual budget has nearly doubled to more than \$75.5 million. The MC endowment has risen from \$36 million to \$80.9 million.

What began as a \$65 million Growing the Vision campaign for

"All Mississippi Baptists are very aware of the outstanding job that Lee Royce has done as the leader of the oldest education institution in the state. People that have worked closely with him know his personal commitment to Christ."

Tommy King

William Carey University president

scholarships, academic needs, facilities, and a bigger endowment has produced \$87.4 million.

During his administration at Mississippi College, over 1,100 MC students have made first-time professions of faith in Jesus Christ. In addition, over 5,000 students have gone on church mission trips in the U.S. and around the world.

The Miami, Fl., native and his wife Rhoda will retire to Northern

Virginia to be closer to their son Mark, a college instructor.

Hundreds in the sanctuary at First Church gave Royce a standing ovation as he concluded his farewell remarks. Before he left the podium, Royce received a resolution in his honor from convention president Doug Broome, senior pastor of First Church, Natchez, representing Mississippi Baptists.

Tommy King, president of Baptist-affiliated William Carey University in Hattiesburg, used part of his convention report time to note Royce's service to Christian higher education.

"All Mississippi Baptists are very aware of the outstanding job that Lee Royce has done as the leader of the oldest education institution in the state," King said in a follow-up interview. "People that have worked closely with him know his personal commitment to Christ."

Mississippi College trustees are working with a national search firm to select a new president.

2017 Mississippi Baptist Convention messengers pass pair of resolutions

JACKSON, Miss. (Special) — On Nov. 1, messengers to the 2017 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention unanimously approved the following two resolutions:

NO. 1 RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION

Whereas, the 182nd Annual Session of the Mississippi Baptist Convention has again been the recipients of the kind hospitality of the First Baptist Church of Jackson; and

Whereas, we the messengers of the 182nd Annual Session have been blessed, encouraged and challenged by the fellowship, worship, reports and have had the opportunity to conduct business as planned by the Committee on Order of Business, the institutions, and agencies of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and the Convention of officers and committees;

Therefore, be it resolved that with hearts filled with gratitude we express appreciation to:

Dr. L. Lavon Gray, Minister of Music and Transition Team

Leader, the staff, and members of First Baptist Church of Jackson,

The speakers, singers and instrumentalists who led us in worship during the convention,

Dr. Doug Broome, our Convention President, who has led as president with a marvelous Christ-like spirit and has been an outstanding ambassador across Mississippi and far beyond,

And to all of the officers, members of all boards, trustees of all agencies and institutions, committee members, and volunteers, who have served this Convention faithfully.

NO. 2 RESOLUTION ON THE 500 YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

Whereas, on October 31, 1517, 500 years ago, Martin Luther tacked his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of The Wittenberg Chapel; and

Whereas, we acknowledge that he did so in an effort to reform the church, and to call into question practices

and teachings unbecoming to the church and her leadership; and

Whereas, we acknowledge that many of the great truths of that reformation have been distilled into what we now call the five Solas:

Sola Gratia - Grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Sola Fide - Faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:9)

Solus Christus - Christ alone (John 14:6)

Soli Deo Gloria - The Glory of God alone (1 Corinthians 10:31, Revelation 4:11)

Sola Scriptura - Scripture alone (2 Timothy 3:16); and

Therefore, be it resolved that we, the messengers to the 182nd Mississippi Baptist Convention, acknowledge, honor, and celebrate the historical significance of this day;

Be it finally resolved that we will encourage church leaders to protect doctrinal fidelity by holding to the truths in the five Solas consistent with The Baptist Faith and Message.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Fairview Church, Indianapolis:** 144th homecoming, Nov. 19, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; David Carlton, speaker.

► **Concord Church, Smith County:** Homecoming and dedication of pastor's new home, Nov. 19, 11 a.m., followed by Thanksgiving lunch.

MS POSITIONS

PINE GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Resume sent to 124 Gather Johnson Rd. Magee, MS 39111, pine.grove.baptist@att.net.

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PAGPZXP, MEWDE OEA TGEOAH EGOE

LIO WX EWP ZMX LZMAH.

GDOP ZXA: PANAX

Clue: O = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 20:29

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org

MEMORIAL

cont. from p. 1

the chair. The chairs are placed where the named victim fell in the hail of gunfire.

One particularly poignant placement has the chair of a deceased mother-to-be with its red rose, alongside a chair for her unborn baby with a pink rose.

"In most situations like this, the building would be closed off for months, but America was attacked, and we want America to grieve with us because they've expressed so much love for us. We don't want to appear defeated. We're back in business, and it's God's business," the church's associate pastor, Mark Collins, told the Washington Post.

Earlier reports indicated the building would be demolished after the massacre made it unusable, but church officials said that decision has not yet been made.

Meanwhile, an outpouring of love and prayers from Southern Baptists across the U.S. and around the world is meant to convey a simple message, according to convention leaders.

"We take care of our own," stated Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Conven-



IN MEMORIAM — The sanctuary of First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, was reopened Nov. 12 as a memorial to the 26 people killed there the previous Sunday. (Screen capture from CNN)

tion (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville and formerly a Texas pastor, as he and SBC President Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis, and his wife Donna spent three days helping to serve families distraught over the massacre of half of the congregation.

The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga., in coordination with SBTC, has offered to cover that cost using funds pledged by an anonymous donor.

In addition, local ministers accepted an offer from the Southern Baptists of Texas

Convention to host a community-wide prayer meeting at nearby Floresville. Independent School District's Eschenburg Field, which was attended by an estimated 2,500 or more people and more than 100 media representatives.

Several of the children slain at the church had attended schools in the district.

Editor's note: Original article courtesy of the TEXAN, news journal of the SBTC, and Baptist Press. William H. Perkins Jr., editor of The Baptist Record, contributed updates at press deadline.

LAWS

cont. from p. 1

increasing not only in Pakistan but in Egypt, Algeria, Bangladesh, and Indonesia.

The situation for minority faith groups, which includes Christians in those countries with blasphemy laws, is growing worse, said Paul Marshall, Wilson professor of religious freedom at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and an expert on blasphemy laws.

"There is an escalation of pressure and charges of blasphemy against religious minorities in many Muslim-ma-

jority countries, both in terms of formal legal charges by the government and also in private accusations by radicals, vigilantes, and terrorists," Marshall said in an e-mail interview with BP.

Those private accusations are more dangerous than government charges, he said. For example, nobody has been executed for blasphemy under Pakistan's current laws, which date from the 1980s, but dozens, perhaps hundreds, have been murdered after they have been accused of blasphemy or quasi-blasphemy laws.

USCIRF, an official federal government entity, issued a re-

port in August showing more than one-third of the world's countries have blasphemy laws. Most of the blasphemy laws in those 71 countries not only transgress international human rights standards but fail to fully protect freedom of expression and impose unduly severe punishments on violators, according to the report.

The USCIRF report showed the five countries with the worst scores in its survey — Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Qatar in that order — all use blasphemy laws to guard the state religion of Islam and violate the rights of other religious groups in the process.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are, and have been, special to our special needs.

OCTOBER 15-31

HONORS

Doris Justice
Mr. & Mrs. Leroy Peoples

OCTOBER 15-31

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Mr. Alfred Barrett
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmie L. Mantion
Mr. Lewis Bass
Mrs. Barbara Bass
Mrs. Janie T. Bilbo
Mr. & Mrs. Gregg T. Tindle
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Mr. Wayne Williams
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur
Mr. Thomas Williamson
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Happy Thanksgiving

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5 ESV

The Baptist Children's Village began with the faith of one pastor 120 years ago and has been sustained since then through the faithfulness of Mississippi Baptists. We are thankful for you and how God has used you to provide love and hope for thousands of children across our state for your partnership.

Changing one life changes generations.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Set Free • Leviticus 16:3-10, 29-30

Five men dressed in orange jumpsuits slowly walk into the secured area of the jail. Their hands are cuffed, a belly chain and leg irons restrain and dismiss any thought of running away. The officer points them to the intake area where they are directed to face the brick wall. Standing in line, the officer takes his key and begins to unlock the handcuffs; then the belly chain and leg irons from each individual. The clank of the chains hitting the floor echoes through the hallway. Are they set free?

An individual does not have to be behind bars to experience the chains that bind. Sin holds everyone captive. But there is One who became our scapegoat; bearing all the sin of the world. However, every individual must make a choice; a day when they recognize their sin and their need for a Savior. He is the one who sets us free and then we are free indeed (John 8:31-32, 36). As you study today's lesson ask yourself, when was the day I genuinely repented of my sin, placed my faith in Christ, and made Him Lord of my life.

The following is a brief statement regarding Leviticus 16 from the new Spurgeon Study Bible (Holman Bible Publishers): "If we may ever set any portion of Scripture before another, this is one of the most precious chapters in the whole compass of revela-

tion and, in some respects, the most remarkable of all." Remarkable because the entire chapter centers on forgiveness and God's plan for redemption. With this thought in mind, let us begin with...

Preparing to Sacrifice (Lev. 16:3-6) - The Lord spoke to Moses and gave the following instructions: Aaron was not to come into the holy of holies whenever he wanted. If he did, he would die. He was to bring a young bull for the sin offering and ram for a burnt offering. Next, he was to enter the holy

of holies dressed in certain clothing and clean. Additionally, Aaron was to take from the people of Israel two male goats for the sin offering and a ram for the burnt offering.

Before the garments were worn, Aaron was to bathe his body in water. Then the holy linen tunic, linen undergarments, a linen sash was to be tied around him and a linen turban was to be wrapped around his head. This

clothing was less ornate, a stark contrast, than what was normally worn by the high priest. It was a symbol of humility and it represented his need for seeking God's mercy.

"Then Aaron shall offer the bull for the sin offering which is for himself, that he may make atonement for himself and for his household" (v. 6 NASB). In other words, Aaron had to deal with his own sin before he could act as the

High Priest for the Israelites.

The Chosen Goat (Lev. 16:7-10) - The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word

'scapegoat' as "a person who is blamed for the wrongdoing, mistakes, or faults of others." Aaron chose two goats, presented them at the door of the tent of the meeting. Casting lots - "But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat" (v. 10, NASB). John McArthur writes, "This goat (lit. Azazel or

'escape goat') pictured the substitutionary bearing and total removal of sin which would later be fully accomplished by Jesus Christ" (Heb. 9:28; 10:1-10 NASB).

The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-30) - Note the sequence of activities from verses 6-28. The next two verses provide special instructions regarding everything which has just transpired. It was to be a permanent observance in the seventh month, on the tenth day (September/October) with humility; an annual atonement (Heb. 10:4). Furthermore, no work was to be done on this holy day. Looking ahead to Leviticus 23:26-32, it is here we see the day referred to as "The Day of Atonement." "It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places... a Sabbath of solemn rest" (Lev. 26:31, 32). And it has been to this very generation. Yom Kippur is observed as the holiest day of the year for the Jews.

"My chains are gone, I've been set free, My God, my Savior has ransomed me, And like a flood His mercy rains. Unending love, Amazing grace" (lyrics from the song, "Amazing Grace" by Chris Tomlin).

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Explore the Bible

with Laura Leathers

Hannah: Trust-Filled Prayer • 1 Samuel 1:9-11, 17-18, 26-28; 2:1-3

"The priest Eli was on duty at the entrance of GOD's Temple in the customary seat. Crushed in soul, Hannah prayed to God and cried and cried—inconsolably. Then she made a vow: Oh, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, ... It so happened that as she continued in prayer before GOD, Eli was watching her closely. Hannah was praying in her heart, silently. Her lips moved, but no sound was heard. Eli jumped to the conclusion that she was drunk. He approached her and said, 'You're drunk! How long do you plan to keep this up? Sober up, woman!'" 1 Samuel 1:9-14 (MSG).

Eli was not very tactful, he jumped to an unjustified conclusion that Hannah was drunk and blurted out "You're drunk! How long do you plan to keep this up? Sober up, woman!" Looking elsewhere in the scriptures, we find that people deeply interacting with the Holy Spirit can easily be misunderstood to be drunk because of the depth of their emotional and spiritual interaction with God. In Acts, the people in Jerusalem were so surprised by the power of the Spirit in Christians' lives on the day of Pentecost that "some sneered and said 'They're full of new wine.' But Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them: 'Men of Judah and all you residents of Jerusalem, let me

explain this to you and pay attention to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only nine in the morning. On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity:" Acts 2:13-17 (HCSB).

Paul even goes so far as to warn believers, "And don't get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions,

but be filled by the Spirit:" Ephesians 5:18 (HCSB). But this story with Hannah was centuries before the preaching at Pentecost and before Paul explained to the Ephesians the dramatic effect the Holy Spirit can have on worshipers and the faithful in fervent prayer. So Hannah had to answer Eli on her own: "No, my lord," Hannah replied. "I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven't had any wine or beer; I've been pouring out my heart before the LORD. Don't think of me as a wicked woman; I've been praying from the depth of my anguish and

resentment." 1 Samuel 1:15-16 (CSB).

Fortunately for Hannah, Eli was spiritually in tune with God enough to understand and accept her explanation. "Eli responded, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the request you've made of him," 1 Samuel 1:17 (CSB). Eli's understanding and blessing helped Hannah enough that she left the Temple to eat and was no longer despondent.

God did answer Hannah's fervent

prayer for the boy, Samuel. In the second chapter of 1 Samuel:

"Hannah prayed: 'My heart rejoices in the LORD; my horn

is lifted up by the LORD. My mouth boast over my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD. There is no one besides you! And there is no rock like our God,' 1 Samuel 2:1-2. To understand how great Hannah was rejoicing in the LORD's help, we need to be reminded why she was so despondent when her family made this annual pilgrimage to the Tabernacle.

Hannah had made this emotionally difficult trip to Shiloh many times and it was spiritually harder every year. When Elkanah, Hannah's husband, made the sacrifices he gave Hannah twice as much to eat as her rival wife, Peninnah. Do you think that this favoritism by Peninnah's husband for his other wife, Hannah, set well with Peninnah? Your understanding that Peninnah would not be happy is confirmed in the scriptures: "Her rival would taunt her severely just to provoke her, because the LORD had kept Hannah from conceiving," 1 Samuel 1:6 (HCSB).

God answered Hannah's faithful prayer with the birth of her son, Samuel. When Samuel was old enough to go to the Temple at Shiloh, Hannah took great pride in introducing him to Eli as God's answer to her prayers that the priest had confirmed. She was not certain that Eli would remember her so she reminded him this way: "Please my lord," she said, "as surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked him for, I now give the boy to the LORD," 1 Samuel 1:26-28 (CSB).

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Bible Studies for Life

with Don Hicks



LifeWay Research: Americans know Billy Graham

NASHVILLE (BP) — In the fall of 1949, a little-known Baptist preacher launched a series of revival meetings at a "canvass cathedral" in Los Angeles at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Hill Street.

The meetings were supposed to last three weeks. Instead, the meetings continued for eight weeks, drew more than 300,000 people, and made Billy Graham a household name. Nearly 70 years later, the 99-year-old Graham remains one of the best-known preachers in America, according to a survey by LifeWay Research, an arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville.

"We'd be hard-pressed to find another American Christian leader who has that kind of name recognition," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

The survey of 1,000 churchgoers who attend a Protestant or nondenominational church at least once a month found Graham has had widespread influence. Two-thirds of those surveyed had contact with Graham's ministry, according to the LifeWay data.

On the other hand, four percent of those surveyed said they "have no idea who Billy Graham is." The data showed churchgoers ages 18-34 are most likely not to know Graham (16%). In contrast, only one percent of those 35 and older don't know him.

Older churchgoers have the most interaction with Graham's ministry. Three-quarters of Protestant churchgoers ages 65 and older have seen one of his sermons on television, as have 57% of those ages 50-64.

Nineteen percent of Protestant churchgoers ages 65 and older, 14% of those ages 50-64, said they've been to a Graham crusade.

Fourteen percent of Baptists and 12% of nondenominational churchgoers are most likely to have gone to a Graham crusade. Lutherans at three percent are least likely.

Billy Graham's influence

% of Protestant and nondenominational American churchgoers who say they have:

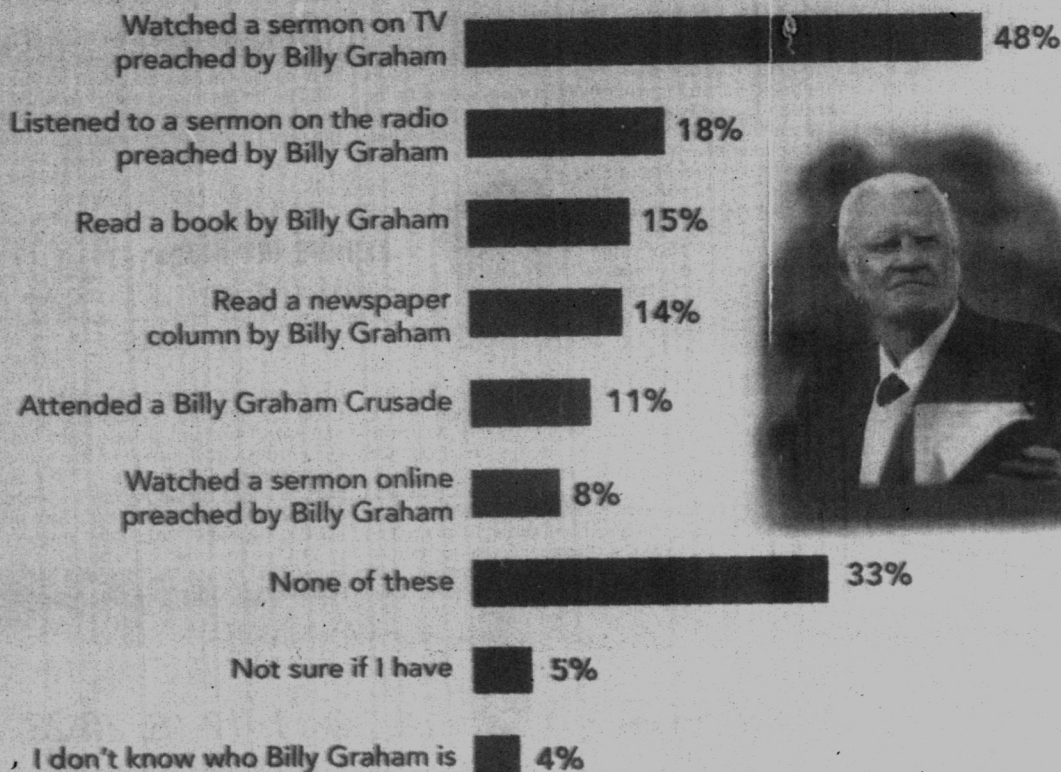


Photo provided by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

LifeWay

LifeWayResearch.com

Hundreds dead, thousands injured in Iran/Iraq earthquake



MAJOR SHAKE — Iranian rescue workers and survivors of a Nov. 12 earthquake at the border with Iraq begin digging through the rubble. Baptist Global Response is currently analyzing the situation to determine how Baptists can help. (BP screen capture from ISAN-CNN)

NASHVILLE (BP) — More than 450 people have been killed and 7,000 injured in the 7.3-magnitude quake that struck Nov. 12 along the Iranian border with Iraq, with major aftershocks continuing to shake the region extending into Turkey, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Lebanon, according to CNN.

Iran and Iraq both have started major rescue efforts. In the meantime, Southern Baptists are sifting through reports to decide the best response for the devastated area.

"We are definitely calling for people to pray for those affected, but at this point we really don't have an idea what the response will be like," said Jeff Palmer, executive director of Baptist Global Response (BGR). "We will know more in the next few days."

Access is an issue in some of the affected region, so it's possible BGR's response might not lean on sending volunteers into the area, Palmer said. He added that BGR has focused heavily on preparing nationals in locations worldwide to be able to respond quickly to hurting people around them.

"BGR has been around for 10 years now, and we have trained and equipped thousands of local partners who can help us respond," Palmer said, noting that the drought situation in Africa and the Syrian refugee crisis have been long-term, ongoing efforts.

"It's great help if we can have front-line people who are already there and have survived events like this before in their area. We are constantly training and building the capacity of lo-

cal partners so that when these bad times come, they are ready to respond."

The strategy has seen success in places like Puerto Rico, where trained nationals moved into action following recent hurricanes. It also helped in Mexico City, where a devastating 7.1-magnitude earthquake killed 369 people in September.

The areas of Iran and Iraq hit by the quake are no stranger to this type of disaster. Iran, where most of the casualties have been reported, sits on a major fault line between the Arabian and Eurasian plates.

In 2003, the city of Bam had the world's most deadly earthquake this century. About 26,000 people died, according to CNN.

For more information or to give to relief efforts, visit gobgr.org.